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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3092
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SHUM, AR
SUBJECT: THE TARNOWSKI STORY REGARDING "THE LIST OF 7500"

REF: BUENOS AIRES 9710

SUMMARY: WE EXPECT A HIGHLY CRITICAL ARTICLE TO APPEAR SHORTLY IN THE LONDON TIMES HINTING AT USG IRRESPONSIBILITY IN PUBLICIZING A LIST OF PERSONS ALLEGED TO HAVE BEEN DETAINED OR "DISAPPEARED" AT THE HANDS OF THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT WITHOUT PROPER VERIFICATION OF THIS LIST. EXCERPTS FROM THE ANDREW TARNOWSKI ARTICLE ARE CITED BELOW. SHOULD THIS SUBJECT BE RAISED IN WASHINGTON WE SUGGEST QUOTING FROM THE AMBASSADOR'S PRESS CONFERENCE ON NOVEMBER 29, MRS. BERIAN'S REMARKS TO THE PRESS IN BUENOS AIRES NOVEMBER 21, AND THE AIDE-MEMOIRE THE EMBASSY SENT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY ON NOVEMBER 28, 1977 APPLICABLE PORTIONS OF THE PRESS CONFERENCES ARE CITED AT THE END OF THIS MESSAGE. END SUMMARY

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1. ANDREW TARNOWSKI HAS GIVEN THE EMBASSY COPY OF A

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STORY WE FILED DECEMBER 21 WITH LONDON TIMES. HIGHLIGHTS ARE:

2. "EVIDENCE HAS EMERGED HERE TO CAST DOUBTS ON THE CREDIBILITY OF A WIDELY-PUBLICIZED LIST, PREPARED BY HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS IN THE UNITED STATES, OF PERSONS WHO HAVE ALLEGEDLY SUFFERED HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN ARGENTINA. THE LIST WAS BROUGHT HERE LAST MONTH AMID A BLAZE OF PUBLICITY BY MR. CYRUS VANCE, THE US SECRETARY OF STATE." STORY CONTINUED THAT EXISTENCE OF THE LIST AND THE SECRETARY'S INTENTION TO PRESENT IT HAD BEEN WIDELY PUBLISHED IN WASHINGTON BEFORE THE SECRETARY DEPARTED FOR HIS NOVEMBER 21 VISIT TO BUENOS AIRES. TARNOWSKI ALLEGES "NO EFFORT WAS MADE, AT BRIEFINGS DURING HIS VISIT, TO DISABUSE REPORTERS OF THE BELIEF THAT THE LIST [illegible]INCLUDED 7,000 CASES AND PORTRAYED THE PRESENT HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN ARGENTINA. A SENIOR OFFICIAL INSISTED THAT IT WAS ACCURATE, AND THIS IMPRESSION WAS AGAIN NOT CORRECTED WHEN THE US AMBASSADOR GAVE A PRESS CONFERENCE ABOUT IT AFTER MR. VANCE'S DEPARTURE."

3. TARNOWSKI THEN LAUNCHES INTO HIS INVESTIGATION OF LIST BY CITING THAT THE LIST PRESENTED IN FACT CONTAINS ONLY 5591 NAMES, INCLUDING THOSE OF PERSONS ALLEGED TO HAVE DIED OR DISAPPEARED BEFORE THE MILITARY TAKEOVER IN MARCH OF 1976. TARNOWSKI FINDS THAT, OF 687 NAMES ON A 16-PAGE PORTION HE SAMPLED, 20 PERCENT REFER TO INCIDENTS BEFORE THE MILITARY TAKEOVER AND 39 PERCENT TO PERSONS WHO DISAPPEARED OR WERE DETAINED AFTER THE COUP. 39 PERCENT OF THE NAMES CARRY NO DATE. "PROJECTING THESE FINDINGS, THE LIST THEREFORE SPECIFIED NOT 4,156 ALLEGED HUMAN RIGHTS

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VIOLATIONS UNDER THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT BUT AN ESTIMATED 1,621." (COMMENT: TARNOWSKI DOES NOT ADDRESS QUESTION WHY PERSONS DETAINED BEFORE THE COUP HAVE NOT BEEN MORE EXPEDITIOUSLY PROCESSED.)

4. LATER IN HIS STORY TARNOWSKI COMES TO THE POINT HE TOLD US EARLIER HE INTENDED TO MAKE: "I CAN REVEAL THAT NEITHER THE STATE DEPARTMENT NOR THE EMBASSY CHECKED OR COUNTED THE LIST BEFORE IT WAS SO NOISILY DELIVERED. IN ADDITION, THE UNITED STATES HAS FAILED TO DISCLAIM

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THE CONTINUED LINKING OF MR. VANCE'S NAME WITH THE 7,500 FIGURE BY ORGANIZATIONS LIKE AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL." TARNOUSKI GOES ON TO SUGGEST "NOW THAT THE TRUTH IS OUT, ATTENTION MAY BE PAID TO PRESIDENT JORGE RAFAEL VIDELA'S RECENT STATEMENT THAT HIS GOVERNMENT'S BAD IMAGE IS PARTLY DUE TO AN INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN WHICH TENDS, BY EXAGGERATING THE FACTS, TO ISOLATE ARGENTINA FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD'."

5. TARNOUSKI WINDS UP HIS ARTICLE BY STATING THAT ALTHOUGH THE ARGENTINE SITUATION IS A SERIOUS ONE, "NO SERVICE IS DONE TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS CAUSE HERE BY PUBLICIZING AND MISREPRESENTING ABROAD ILL-PREPARED LISTS COMPILED BY APPARENTLY WELL-MEANING GROUPS, PARTLY FROM OBSCURE SOURCES". TARNOUSKI SPECULATES THAT MORE RELIABLE INFORMATION REGARDING VICTIMS OF REPRESSION WOULD BE FREELY AVAILABLE HERE IN ARGENTINA--INCLUDING FROM THE "PERMANENT ASSEMBLY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS", WHICH CALCULATES 6,000 ARRESTS WITHOUT CHARGE SINCE THE COUP AND NO LESS THAN 6,000 DISAPPEARANCES OF WHICH THE ASSEMBLY CAN FULLY DOCUMENT 1,000 AS ABDUCTIONS BY PERSONS CLAIMING TO REPRESENT THE GOVERNMENT.

6. COMMENT. WE DID WHAT WE COULD HERE TO PUT PERSPECTIVE ON TARNOUSKI'S VIEWS BY CITING TO HIM STATEMENTS MADE BY USG MEMBERS GIVING OUR TRUE ASSESSMENT OF THE LISTS'S
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IMPORTANCE. AS REPORTED REFTEL WE WAS READ EMBASSY'S AIDE-MEMOIRE WHICH TRANSMITTED THE LIST, AND THE AMBASSADOR'S PRESS CONFERENCE HANDLING OF THIS SUBJECT. TARNOUSKI'S STORY NEVERTHELESS FRAILS AGAINST WHAT HE ALLEGES TO HAVE BEEN THE ASSIGNMENT OF THE PRESTIGE OF MR. VANCE'S NAME AND THE STATE DEPARTMENT TO A FLIMSY BIT OF EVIDENCE REGARDING EXCESSES OF ARGENTINE REPRESSION.

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7. SHOULD THIS SUBJECT COME IN WASHINGTON WE CITE BELOW THE AMBASSADOR'S NOVEMBER 29 PRESS CONFERENCE IN WHICH HE DISCUSSES THE LIST, AND THE TEXT OF MRS. DERIAN'S STATEMENT SHE MADE REGARDING THE LIST WHEN SHE TALKED WITH REPORTERS HERE ON NOVEMBER 21. TEXT OF THE AIDE-MEMOIRE EMBASSY USED TO PRESENT THE LIST TO THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IS GIVEN IN BUENOS AIRES 0973.

8. STATEMENT FROM AMBASSADOR'S PRESS CONFERENCE:
QUESTION: DURING THIS WEEKEND THE ARGENTINE FOREIGN MINISTRY PUBLISHED A COMMUNIQUE DENYING THAT SECRETARY OF STATE CYRUS VANCE HAD PRESENTED A LIST OF 7,500 DISAPPEARED PERSONS IN ARGENTINA I WOULD LIKE TO ASK IF WE BOUGHT THE LIST, PRESENTED IT, OR WHAT IS THE SITUATION.
ANSWER: YES, THAT'S RIGHT. UNFORTUNATELY THIS LENT ITSELF TO CERTAIN ERRORS... BUT WE HAVE ALREADY CLEARED UP THE MATTER. A GROUP OF PEOPLE WENT UP TO PRESIDENT CARTER... THERE WERE THREE GROUPS: ONE WAS A JEWISH GROUP, ONE CATHOLIC GROUP, AND THE OTHER AN INDEPENDENT GROUP ON HUMAN RIGHTS. IN EFFECT (THESE GROUPS) LEFT A LIST OF 7,500 PEOPLE WHO HAVE DISAPPEARED OR WHO ARE
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IN JAIL. WHEN SECRETARY VANCE VISITED BUENOS AIRES, HE AND MRS. PATT DERIAN HAD A LIST WITH 7,500 NAMES. THIS

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LIST HAS BROUGHT TO BUENOS AIRES, BUT WHEN HE WENT TO THE FOREIGN MI[illegible], SECRETARY VANCE MADE IT CLEAR, MADE IT EVIDENT, THE FOREIGN MINISTER AND OTHERS THAT HE WAS BRINGING [illegible]d HIM A LIST OF 7,500 NAMES OF PEOPLE IN JAIL OR DISAPPEARED THAT HAD BEEN LEFT WITH PRESIDENT CARTER. THIS LIST IS NOT A "NORTH AMERICAN LIST". IT IS A LIST THAT A GROUP HAD BROUGHT... THREE, THREE GROUPS AND WE CANNOT CERTIFY NOR GUARANTEE THAT THOSE NAMES OR THAT EVEN THAT LIST IS ADEQUATE OR TRUTHFUL ("VERIDICAL"), BUT SEC VANCE ONLY SAID THAT THIS LIST IS GOING TO BE PRESENTED TO THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT THRU DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS, THRU AMBASSADOR CASTRO, TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER. WE NEVER SAID WE WAS GOING TO PRESENT THE LIST HIMSELF THAT DAY AT THE MINISTRY, NOR DID WE DO SO, IT WAS NOT TURNED IN THAT DAY AT THE MINISTRY. THIS LIST WAS PRESENTED YESTERDAY, OR THE DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY---THRU THIS EMBASSY *TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, WITH A DIPLOMATIC NOTE FROM THE* GOVERNMENT OF THE US. THE LIST EXISTS; IT WAS BEEN PRESENTED AND IT'S IN THE MINISTRY, BUT WHEN SEC VANCE WAS HERE IT WAS NOT PRESENTED.
QUESTION: IF THE US STATE DEPARTMENT DOES NOT VOUCH FOR THE LIST, WHAT WAS THE OBJECTIVE IN PRESENTING IT?
ANSWER: THE OBJECTIVE, OF COURSE, IS THAT A GROUP WENT *TO THE WHITE HOUSE, COMPLAINING, AND DEMANDING INFORMATION* ABOUT THE DISAPPEARANCE OF PEOPLE AND THE IMPRISONMENT OF PEOPLE, ASKING THE PRESIDENT TO PLEASE TO PRESENT THAT LIST FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF THE US TO THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT SO THAT THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT WOULD TAKE THE NECESSARY STEPS THAT IT JUDGED PRUDENT UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES. WE DID NOT INSIST THAT AN ANSWER BE GIVEN; WE DID NOT INSIST THAT THE GOVERNMENT CLARIFY WHY, OR

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NOW OR WHEN. WE TOLD THE GOVERNMENT CLEARLY THAT THE LIST IS A LIST PRESENTED BY US, THRU US TO THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT SO THEY COULD DO WITH IT WHATEVER THEY CONSIDERED TO BE IN THEIR POWER AND BE OF SOUND JUDGMENT AND TO ASSUME WHATEVER ATTITUDE THEY DEEMED NECESSARY.

9. MRS. DERIAN'S STATEMENT:
QUESTION: (R.MOREAU) DID YOU BRING WITH YOU OR HAND OVER A LIST OF SOME 7,500 PEOPLE WH'D DISAPPEARED OR BEEN ARRESTED SINCE THE COUP?
ANSWER: YES, I CARRIED IT DOWN HERE, AND IT IS GOING TO

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BE TRANSMITTED. IN ADDITION, I AM NOT SURE IT CONTAINS NAMES OBTAINED ONLY SINCE THE COUP. AS A MATTER OF FACT, I DON'T EVEN KNOW THE DATES OF THOSE NAMES. I HAVE ALSO BROUGHT WITH ME ENQUIRIES FROM MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, FROM OTHER INDIVIDUALS IN THE US, AND FROM ORGANIZATIONS IN US. SOME OF THEM ARE DUPLICATES AS A MATTER OF FACT, AND I HAVE RECEIVED SOME SINCE I ARRIVED HERE.
QUESTION: HAS THIS LIST TRANSMITTED BY THE US GOVERNMENT OR HAS IT CARRIED DOWN FOR THE PEOPLE?
ALDUDA: NO, NO, IT IS BEING TRANSMITTED BY THE US GOVERNMENT. WHAT HAPPENS IS ORGANIZATIONS IN THE US WHO ARE HIGHLY REGARDED INCLUDING THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, AND THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS COUNCIL, (JOHN HAS A LIST OF THE ORGANIZATIONS) TRANSMITTED TO US A REPORT BY ANOTHER ORGANIZATION ASKING US IF WE WOULD MAKE AN INQUIRY ON BEHALF OF THEIR PEOPLE AND TRANSMIT THIS LIST TO THE GOVERNMENT OF ARGENTINA.
WE AGREED TO DO SO. REGARDING THE LIST, WE CANNOT VERIFY THAT EVERY NAME IS PROPERLY SPELLED, THAT EACH PERSON THERE IS STILL IN THE STATUS THAT THAT PERSON WAS IN WHEN THE LIST WAS PUT TOGETHER. WHAT WE CAN DO IS SAY THAT WE HAVE RECEIVED INQUIRIES. THESE PEOPLE OF WHOM NOBODY KNOWS THE LOCATION, HAVE FAMILIES THAT CARE ABOUT THEM. IT IS PURELY A HUMANITARIAN GESTURE.
IF IT TURNED OUT THAT 90 PERCENT OF THOSE NAMES WERE THE WRONG
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ONES, AND 10 PERCENT WERE THE RIGHT ONES, AND THOSE 10 PERCENT WERE ACCOUNTED FOR, IT WOULD BE WORTH THE DOING OF IT.
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